ISSN 2073-5111(Print)

nature net

naturekenya.org

May 2019

Hell's Kitchen: Dakatcha Woodland's ecotourism jewel

PHOTO BY JOHN MWACHARO

A tourist explores one of Hell's Kitchen's gorges.

BY EDWIN UTUMBI

With its spectacular erosion landscapes, Hell's Kitchen is undoubtedly one of the major tourist attractions located within Dakatcha Woodland Key Biodiversity Area. This once great sandstone ridge worn by wind, rain, and floods into a series of jagged gorges is drawing domestic and international visitors, providing a lifeline for youths engaged in ecotourism activities while supporting conservation of the biodiversity-rich surrounding forest.

Hell's Kitchen Tour Operators Association, a community-based group, has been managing the site. The group is one of the community groups initially contacted by Nature Kenya to support conservation activities in Dakatcha between 2002 and 2006. Back then, Hell's Kitchen's total earnings, mostly from gate and tour guiding fees, stood at Ksh. 600,000 annually. This interaction with Nature Kenya paved way for the transformation of Hell's Kitchen into a leading tourist attraction in the area.

Nature Kenya, through funding from donors and partners, built the group's capacity by training its members on leadership skills, book keeping, tour guiding and hospitality management, among others. With newly acquired skills, group members soon realized Hell's Kitchen's ecotourism potential, prompting a shift in the way they were conducting business. Improvement of service delivery through value addition was now the group's new focus.

It didn't take long for Hell's Kitchen to realize improved earnings. Confidence levels went up as well. This saw the group engage independently in fund-raising activities that led to it putting up an office, a restaurant, a meeting shed and two rooms for accommodation. The new developments further enhanced revenue streams, pushing annual earnings to about Ksh.1 million.

Today, Hell's Kitchen's contribution to improvement of community livelihood is quite evident. Last year a total of Ksh. 1.2 million was earned by the community through the iconic tourist attraction. In addition, the group managing the site has hired community members as support staff. Earnings from the facility have also benefited needy students in the area through a bursary scheme. In 2018 the bursaries supported 84 students. Some of the scheme's beneficiaries have already graduated from college and are currently employed in the government and the private sector.

The success story of Hell's Kitchen inspired the development of another ecotourism facility at Bore Singwaya, the Bore Community Forest Centre.

Hell's Kitchen Tour Operators Association is also actively engaged in conservation work. The group maintains a transect at their site for biodiversity monitoring. One of the group's members is currently the leader of the biodiversity monitoring team in Dakatcha Woodland KBA.

Nature Kenya, through the 'People Partner with Nature (PPN)' program, has supported the group to erect a perimeter fence at Hell's Kitchen, buy cutlery for the restaurant and upgrade the kitchen with a gas stove to curb dependence on firewood and charcoal.

The PPN program is being implemented in partnership with DOF (BirdLife in Denmark) with financial support from DANIDA/ CISU. The overall objective of the program is to 'reduce the destruction of forested KBAs and contribute to the realization of best participatory forest management practices for the benefit of all.' This program is running in Dakatcha, Arabuko-Sokoke Forest and Taita Hills, supporting communities living adjacent to these KBAs to engage in nature-friendly income generating activities such as ecotourism, beekeeping and butterfly farming.

109TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF THE EAST AFRICA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

VENUE
Louis Leakey Hall, Nairobi Museum

DATE Wednesday 8th May 2019

TIME 11:30am - 2:00pm

AGENDA & PROGRAM

11:30a.m: Conservation Forum/Exhibition
12:00pm Coffee/tea and quick lunch
1:00pm Convene in hall

- Minutes of the 108th AGM
- Matters arising from the Minutes
- Chairman's Report
- Honorary Treasurer's Report
- Appointment of Auditor
- Library, Journal, Committees and Projects Report
- Any other business of which due notice in the form of the Resolution to be proposed has been given to the Honorary Secretary, signed by not less than 2 members, not less than 21 days before the date of the meeting
- Election of Office Bearers, Members of the Executive Committee, and Trustees

Nomination forms for office bearers or Executive Committee members may be collected from the office or requested by e-mail.

Part of the action during the 2019 Nature Kenya 'Lungs for Kenya' charity golf tournament at Karen Country Club.

PHOTOS BY JOHN MWACHARO

Vivo Energy managing director Joe Muganda hands over a gift to Karin Middleton, the overall lady winner.

Focus on Mt. Kenya forest restoration at golf meet

BY NORMAN KIBOI

The 2019 'Lungs for Kenya' charity golf tournament was held in March at Karen Country Club. The charity event raised Ksh. 2 million for the restoration of Mt. Kenya forest.

A total of 147 golfers participated in the event that was sponsored by 27 corporates. Vivo Energy Kenya was the main sponsor, for the fifth time in a row. Kenya Breweries Limited were the silver sponsors, NIC Bank bronze sponsors with Lake Turkana Wind Power, Nedbank, Syngenta E.A, Commercial Bank of Africa, DT Dobie Kenya, Knight Frank Kenya, Platinum Credit, Prime Bank and Williamson Tea sponsoring holes.

Others who supported the event with auction and raffle items included Air Kenya, Baringo Island Camp, Hemingways Collection, Karen Country Club, Safarilink, Silverstone Air Services, Woburn Residence – Malindi, Angama Mara, Serena Hotels, ACI Logistics, Jim Cab, the Tamarind Group, Mat Bronze Wildlife Art, the Local Grill, Parapet Cleaning Services, Asmara Restaurant, Andrew Kamiti, Cynthia Falconer, Daphne Butler, Karen Lawrence and Alex Duncanson.

Vulture conservation comes to Tanzania

BY JAMES MUTUNGA

A forum to sensitize the Tanzanian tourism industry on vulture conservation was recently held in Arusha. The one-day workshop that drew 32 participants from Tanzania, Kenya and Israel, brought together tour operators, hoteliers and conservation experts to share experiences and explore ways of collaborating to save African vultures faced with extinction from poisoning and other threats.

It was noted that there was minimal vulture conservation action in Tanzania. Tour operators in attendance expressed interest in collaborating with other stakeholders to enhance vulture conservation activities in the country. Nature Tanzania, which is in the process of registering a partnership contract with BirdLife International, was proposed to take the lead in bringing together the tour industry, government wildlife agencies, and other stakeholders for nature conservation in the country.

James Mutunga, Rebecca Ikachoi and Simon Shati from Nature Kenya made presentations on the Maasai Mara vulture conservation project and distributed vulture conservation publicity materials. The workshop was a follow-up to the recently concluded Champions of the Flyway 2019 fund-raising bird watching race that was held at Eilat, Israel on April 26. During the race, Nature Kenya was represented by James and Rebecca alongside Paul Gacheru, the sites and species manager. Over Ksh. 7 million was raised during the race to support Nature Kenya's vulture conservation project in Maasai Mara.

In Arusha, the Nature Kenya team took participants through the project to reduce vulture deaths from poisoning (See Dec 2018-Jan 2019 Nature Net). They explained vulture conservation community-based activities such as village and market outreaches, and how wildlife poisoning incidents were addressed using the rapid response protocol, saving some of the affected vultures and preventing further deaths by sanitization of the poisoned area.

Itai Shanni from the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (BirdLife in Israel) made a presentation on the Champions of the Flyway. Shanni outlined how the bird-spotting race raises funds and awareness for conservation of birds migrating along the flyways. Funds raised during this year's Champions of the Flyway race will be used to expand coverage of the anti-poisoning campaign.

PHOTO BY JAMES MUTUNGA

Nature Kenya's Rebecca Ikachoi making a presentation about the vulture conservation project in Maasai Mara.

For updates visit
www.naturekeny.org

EDITORIAL TEAM
Fleur Ng'weno
Gloria Waswa
John Mwacharo
Norman Kiboi
Serah Munguti

LAYOUT
John Mwacharo

FRONT BANNER
Peter Usher

NatureKenya
THE EAST AFRICA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
Nature-Kenya @Nature_Kenya
nature_kenya Nature Kenya

For contributions, advertising and subscriptions, contact us by:
Post: P. O. Box 44486 GPO, Nairobi
Telephone: 020 3537568/0780149200/0751624312/ 0771343138
Email: office@naturekenya.org

Printed with support from:

Rare observations at Uhuru Garden

BY PETER MUREITHI

The Wednesday morning bird walk on 17th April at Uhuru Gardens was a spectacular one. On this day we were privileged to spot many migratory birds on their way back to Europe or Asia to breed. To welcome us at the parking area were Common Rock Thrushes. They were many of them all over the place. Their presence overshadowed that of Common Bulbuls and White-browed Sparrow Weavers which are commonly seen in the area.

Within minutes of starting our walk we saw some Red-backed Shrikes. Not far away were Spotted Flycatchers, flying up and down looking for insects. Willow Warblers were busy feeding in a fig tree. A Lesser Grey Shrike could be seen perched on a dry twig nearby. Other migrants spotted included Red-tailed (Isabelline) Shrike, Barn Swallow, Common Whitethroat, Sedge Warbler and an intra-African migrant, the Black Cuckooshrike.

It was indeed a lucky day for the bird watchers to see all these migrants in one place.

PHOTO BY JOHN WAWERU

Common Rock Thrush

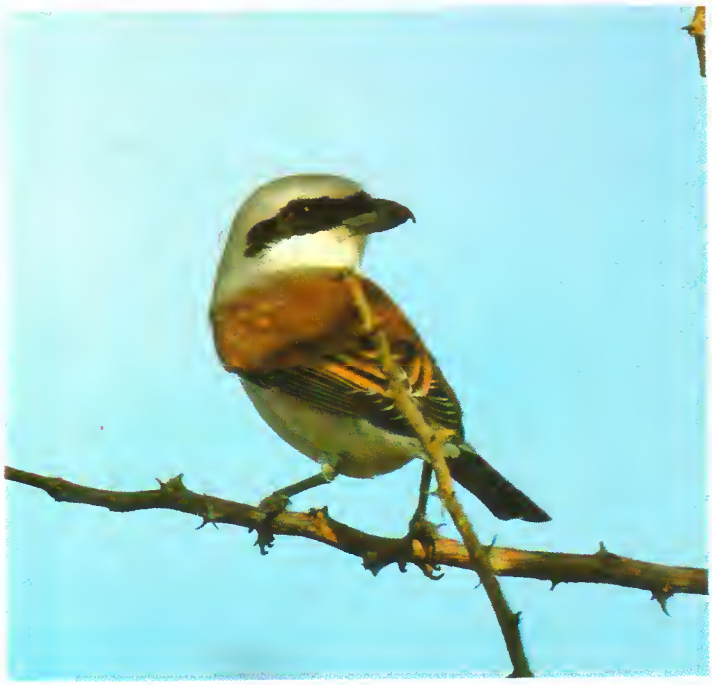

PHOTO BY PETER USHER

Red-backed Shrike

The Evening Sky - May 2019

BY FLEUR NG'WENO

May Stars

The ancient Greeks gave names to the patterns formed by the stars, called constellations. As Kenya is on the equator, we see most of the constellations of the northern and southern hemisphere.

A famous constellation of the north is Ursa Major, the Great Bear, also known as the Plough or the Big Dipper. To see it, turn towards the north (to the right of the sunset). Look for three bright stars in a line, next to four stars forming the corners of a box shape. You can imagine this constellation as a toy car pulled by a string.

Across the sky, in the south, is a famous constellation of the south, the Southern Cross. Look for three bright stars and a fainter fourth star forming the shape of a Christian cross. This is Crux, the Southern Cross. There are two very bright stars to the east (left). At sunset in May, the Cross is low in the southeast and tilted to one side. It straightens up during the evening.

Orion, the Hunter or Warrior, sets due west in the evening. Sirius, the 'dog star' and brightest star of the night, is in the southwest. Canopus, the second brightest star, is further south, low in the sky, and Procyon, the 'little dog', is above Sirius.

There are also bright stars high in the sky. Regulus, in the constellation of Leo the Lion, is overhead. Arcturus is a bright orange light in the northeast. Spica is a sparkling blue-white light in the east. The moon is near Regulus on May 10 and near Spica on May 16.

Planets, May '19

Mars, the "red planet", is in the west in the evening, not far from the reddish star Aldebaran in the constellation of Taurus the Bull. The moon is near Aldebaran on May 6 and near Mars on May 7.

The other planets are best seen just before dawn: brilliant Venus low in the east, bright Jupiter high in the west, golden Saturn almost overhead. The moon is near Venus on May 1 & 2 and on June 2, near Jupiter on May 20 and near Saturn on May 23.

Meteor Shower

In late April and most of May, the Earth passes through dust particles left in space by Comet Halley. When a bit of dust or rock falls in the Earth's atmosphere, it burns up, forming a bright trail of light. This one is called the Eta-Aquarid meteor shower. Best viewing is after midnight on May 6-7 from a dark location, but meteors may be seen on any clear nights.

Moon, May '19

May 4 – new moon. The sighting of the slender new moon on May 5 will usher in the Islamic holy month of Ramadhan. The holiday of Idd ul Fitr, celebrated at the end of Ramadhan, is expected around June 5. May 12 – first quarter, moon overhead at sunset. May 18 – full moon, rising in the east. May 26 – last quarter, moon overhead at dawn.

REPTILE AND AMPHIBIANS BIOLOGY COURSE

13TH – 17TH MAY 2019

Cost
Ksh. 10,000

VENUE:
Invertebrate Zoology Labarotory, Nairobi National Museum
This course has been organized by
the Kenya Herpatofauna Working Group
For registration and inquiries:
Call +254 (0) 20 3637568, +254 (0) 780 149200, +254 (0) 771343138
or send an email to office@naturekenya.org
Registration payment can also be made through Mpesa:
Business number 100300, Account name Reptile Course 2019

MAY 2019 AT A GLIMPSE

May 1st	Morning Bird Walk
May 8th	Morning Bird Walk/109th AGM
May 11th	FoNA Tree Walk
May 15th	Morning Bird Walk
May 18th	FoCP Nature Walk
May 19th	Sunday Bird Watch
May 22nd	Morning Bird Walk/Public Talk
May 29th	Morning Bird Walk

Bird ringing every Tuesday morning (check with Ornithology section, National Museums).

Birders Please Note! The Wednesday Morning Birdwalks meet at 8:30 am at the Nairobi National Museum. Transport is on a self-help basis. The group meets in the courtyard of the Nairobi National Museum, past the entrance to the galleries. We normally return at about 12:30 pm.

The Sunday Birdwatch on the THIRD Sunday of each month now also meets at 8:30 am, at the same location. It is a day trip; please bring water and lunch.

Mombasa Birdwalks On the 3rd Saturday of each month. For meeting time and place, please contact Taibali Hamzali <thamzali@gmail.com> / 0733-980540; or Doris Schaule <dorischaule@gmail.com> / 0722-277752. Or check Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FFJmombasa/>

Contact the office for information on other birdwalks in Kakamega, Kisumu, and other sites

Ngong Forest walks - 1st and 3rd Saturday at 9.00 am. Contact Simon 0729-840715

Download free QR Readers from the web and scan this QR (Quick Response) code with your smart phone for pictures and more stories.

Yes! Start my **Nature**Kenya membership

Surname _____

First Name _____

Ms/Mr/Title _____

Address _____

Tel. _____

Mobile _____

Email _____

MEMBERSHIP TYPES	*Ksh Per Year*
Full	2,000
Sponsor	6,000
Family	2,800
Student	1,200
Schools, Clubs	1,500
Corporates	20,000 -30,000

JOIN/RENEW MEMBERSHIP

- Select 'Lipa na Mpesa'
- Select 'Pay Bill'
- Enter business number 100300
- Enter account number (put your lapsed membership number or write new member)
- Enter the amount, enter your PIN
- Confirm details & press OK

For details on associated groups such as Youth Committee, Succulenta, and Friends of Nairobi Arboretum, City Park or Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, contact office@naturekenya.org